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ABSTRACT

This paper defines professional certification as a voluntary process regulated by a profession to measure competencies possessed by its practitioners. A hierarchy of motives for certification is illustrated, and its importance for the fields of adult education and human resource development (HRD) is emphasized. The evolution of the concept of professionalization is presented from four perspectives: philosophical, nontraditional, characteristic, and developmental. Adult education and HRD's status as professions is examined, and the attempts of these fields to develop a fully accepted body of knowledge, a set of practitioner competencies, and a program of professional certification are described. The paper addresses such certification issues as type of administrative approach, identification and validation of competencies, evaluation criteria, grandfathering, recertification, and revocability. Also discussed are positive implications (enhancement of the profession, recognition and increased earning potential for practitioners, and standardization) and negative implications (fragmentation, financial and human costs, and legal difficulties). Finally, the following nine-stage model for developing a professional certification program is presented: (1) identification of purposes or motives, (2) identification of essential competencies, (3) establishment of procedures, (4) identification of prospective candidates, (5) response to identified issues, (6) establishment of criteria, (7) marketing of the program, (8) evaluation and modification of the program, and (9) remarketing of the program. A four-page list of references concludes the document. (SK)

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Information Series No. 307

Professional Certification Implications for Adult Education and HRD

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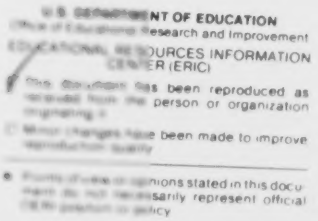
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Foreword

The Educational Resources Information Center Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education (ERIC/ACVE) is one of 16 clearinghouses in a nationwide information system that is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. One of the functions of the clearinghouse is to interpret the literature that is entered into the ERIC database. This paper is of particular interest to practitioners in adult education and human resource development, as well as to professional associations.

The profession is indebted to Michael W. Galbraith and Jerry W. Gilley for their scholarship in the preparation of this paper. Dr. Galbraith is Assistant Professor of Adult Education in the Department of Higher and Adult Education, University of Missouri-Columbia. In addition to other professional association memberships, he is actively involved in the American Assocation for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE), serving on the AAACE Commission of Professors of Adult Education and the AAACE Board of Directors, as well as chairing the Publications Standing Service Unit and the Education for Aging Unit.

Jerry W. Gilley recently became Assistant Professor of Adult Education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He was previously Assistant Professor in the College of Business Administration, University of Central Arkansas. Dr. Gilley has developed a number of publications and presentations on professional certification issues.

The National Center wishes to acknowledge the leadership provided to this effort by Dr. Robert E. Taylor, recently retired Executive Director. Recognition is also due to James A. Farmer, Jr., Professor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Leonard Nadler, Professor of Adult Education, George Washington University; and Floyd McKinney and Wayne Schroeder, Senior Research Specialists, the National Center for Research in Vocational Education; for their critical review of the manuscript prior to publication. Wesley E. Budke and Susan Imel coordinated the publication's development. They were assisted by Sandra Kerka and Cheryl Harrison. Jean Messick, Clarine Cotton, and Sally Robinson typed the manuscript, and Janet Ray served as word processor operator. Rita Bova of the National Center's Editorial Services edited the paper.

Chester K. Hansen
Acting Executive Director
The National Center for Research
in Vocational Education

Executive Summary

Perceptions of professional certification vary greatly, making it a difficult topic to define and describe. These varying perceptions also make it a topic of debate as individuals employed in adult education and human resource development (HRD) consider it for their fields.

Recently, the term "professional certification" has been described as a means of sorting the competent from the incompetent within a field. Some use "professional certification" generically to describe any of a number of different credentialing processes.

This paper defines professional certification as a voluntary process, regulated by the profession, to measure competencies possessed by the practitioner. Emphasis is placed on the concepts that professional certification is voluntary, and that it is regulated by the profession, as opposed to some external agency.

Although admittedly professional certification attempts to measure and thus promote competencies, it also fulfills other purposes. These include enhancement of the profession, protection of the public, deterrence of high attrition levels, avoidance of external intervention, improvement of preprofessional training in the field, gaining revenues, advancement of personal prestige, and keeping members current.

Motives for professional certification can be viewed hierarchically. The levels of the hierarchy, from low to high, are "me-too-ism," "fear," "control," "status," and "self-development."

For the individual, the importance of professional certification is realized in individual performance improvement. For the profession, professional certification provides a framework that allows the group to fulfill its mission, usually the advancement of the profession.

Over the long history of professional certification, professional groups have used arbitrary means to develop certification programs. Today, however, a three-stage approach is often used:

(1) Identifying competencies, validating and placing them in performance terms

(2) Establishing minimum competency levels

(3) Developing the program and encouraging participation

The concept of professionalization can be approached from four different orientations: philosophical, developmental, characteristic, and nontraditional. Philosophical approaches describe

various models of professionalization, whereas the nontraditional approach declares that professionalization is whatever the members of the occupational group declare it is—that is, the occupational group sets its own standards for professionalization.

The characteristic orientation identifies various characteristics that assist in the evolutionary process of a vocation toward professional status. The developmental approach describes a set of behaviors and characteristics that an occupational group acquires on its way to becoming an established profession. In this approach, which the paper develops at length, professional certification is seen as one aspect among many that are part of the evolutionary process of professionalization.

Of the theoretical characteristics of a profession, adult education and HRD possess only two: a code of ethics and the interchange of ideas among members. Neither group has established a fully accepted body of knowledge nor identified a set of competencies needed by a practitioner in the field. Both of these characteristics are common prerequisites to establishing a professional certification program.

These last two characteristics—development of a body of knowledge and a set of competencies—have received considerable attention recently, but the attention has been more concerned with professional development than establishing a certification program. During the 1970s, the discussion and debate over professional certification was much stronger than it has been in recent years, but the topic is once again coming to the forefront.

It should be mentioned that the field of HRD does maintain three certification bodies. However, no single organization has been endorsed by the entire HRD field as the provider of professional certification. In fact, since they have not developed and encouraged a program of professional certification, adult education and HRD are technically not professions, according to the developmental view of professionalization.

There are several issues to be addressed regarding professional certification in the adult education and HRD areas. Issues include the type of administrative approach to be used, which in turn depends upon several financial, legal, and political considerations. The identification and validation of essential professional competencies is another issue to be addressed, along with which criteria will be used to evaluate those competencies.

"Grandfathering," or allowing experienced practitioners to receive professional certification status automatically, is another tough question that must be confronted, among several legal issues. Three final issues are organizational membership rules, recertification, and revocability of certification status.

What are the implications of developing a professional certification program for this occupational group? The positive implications of professional certification include enhancement of the adult education and HRD profession, as well as recognition and increased earning potential for individual practitioners. Professional certification also means that desired competencies will be identified, thus allowing the profession to be standardized and preprofessional training to be improved.

Negative implications of professional certification include the possibility that this issue could widen the gap among different types of practitioners in a field that is already characterized by diversity. Activities that could result in fragmentation are the identification of core competencies, the setting of evaluative criteria, and the proper use of power that comes to a gatekeeper of the

profession. Other negative implications are the costs, both financially and in human terms, as well as certain legal restrictions.

This paper presents a proposed model for the development of a professional certification program. Nine stages are suggested that lead to the development of such a program. These are (1) identification of purposes or motives, (2) identification of essential competencies, (3) establishment of procedures, (4) identification of prospective certification candidates, (5) responding to identified issues, (6) establishment of qualification criteria, (7) marketing the program, (8) evaluating and changing the program after preliminary implementation, and (9) remarketing the program.

Information on professional certification in adult education and HRD may be found in the ERIC system under the following descriptors: Adult Educators, *Certification, *Credentials, Professional Associations, *Professional Development, *Professional Recognition, *Quality Control, *Teacher Certification, Teacher Improvement. Asterisks indicate descriptors having particular relevance.

Introduction

Society expects that practitioners of all disciplines should be professional and competent. Many mechanisms for identifying and determining competence exist today. One approach used for the identification and development of competencies has been the establishment of professional certification programs. Professional certification is often confused or misunderstood in relationship to other credentialing processes such as accreditation and licensure. The reader of this monograph should be cognizant of the fact that professional certification is a homogeneous process, that is, it contains similar characteristics and follows a uniform structure. As a result, professional certification is used in a variety of occupational disciplines.

The purpose of this monograph is to define the concept of professional certification as well as its purposes, motives, historical origins, professional association activities, and the issues and implications for adult education and human resource development fields. A final section will present a model for implementing a professional certification program by professional associations and societies.

In the scope of this monograph, adult education will be defined as a process whereby learning activities are engaged in for the purpose of bringing about change or growth for the adult in a formal or informal educational setting. Human resource development (HRD) will be defined as organized learning activities arranged within an organization in order to enhance performance and/or personal growth for the purpose of improving the job, the individual and/or the organization. The fundamental difference between adult education and HRD is the beneficiary of the educational activity. The primary beneficiary in adult education activities is the participant of those learning activities, whereas the organization is the principal beneficiary of HRD activities.

Professional Certification: An Overview

One purpose of this publication is to describe and analyze professional certification. This is not an easy task, for the perceptions of professional certification vary greatly. To assist in understanding this topic, this section will address the definitional concerns as well as the purposes, motives, and importance of professional certification.

Definitional Dilemma

During the past several decades, the term "professional certification" has been used to describe a process of separating practitioners who are competent, individuals who are capable and qualified to perform the duties and tasks of their respective roles, from those who are not. Various governmental and educational institutions, professional associations, and individuals use certification as a catchall word to describe a number of different credentialing processes such as accreditation and licensure. It is necessary, therefore, to arrive at an acceptable definition in order to communicate effectively the intent of the professional certification process.

The scope of this monograph is to examine professional certification; therefore, it is essential to define and differentiate between the terms professional certification and certification, accreditation, and licensure. Galbraith and Gilley (1985) defined professional certification as "a voluntary process by which a professional association or organization measures the competencies of individual practitioners" (p. 12). Professional certification is distinct from certification in that most certification programs, such as teacher education certification, are in reality a licensure mechanism regulated by state governments. Professional certification, on the other hand, is a voluntary process regulated by the profession itself. Its main intent is not to restrict entrance into the profession, but to advance the competencies of individual practitioners.

Professional certification also should not be confused with the accreditation and licensure process. Accreditation is a voluntary process whereby an agency grants recognition to an educational program or institution such as a school, college, or university that meets predetermined criteria and/or standards.

The primary purpose of accreditation is to evaluate instructional programs while professional certification focuses upon the measurement of competencies of individual practitioners. Both of these processes are voluntary, which means institutions can function without accreditation and individuals can practice in their profession without certification. Both regulation of accreditation and professional certification are administered by professional associations and/or external agencies.

Licensure, however, is a mandatory legal process required by a political governing body in order to protect the public from incompetent practitioners. Individuals within a profession under licensure cannot practice without a license. The similarity between licensure and professional certification is that the recipient of the credential is the individual, not the program.

A diagram developed by Bratton and Hildebrand (1980) summarizes the differences among professional certification, accreditation, and licensure (see table 1). This diagram provides a synopsis of the previous distinctions and definitions.

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION, ACCREDITATION, AND LICENSURE

Type of Credential	Recipient of Credential	Credentialing Body	Required or Voluntary
Professional Certification	Individuals	Association/Agency	Voluntary
Accreditation	Programs	Association/Agency	Voluntary
Licensure	Individuals	Political Body	Required

NOTE: Reprinted, by permission of the publisher, from B. Bratton and M. Hildebrand, "Plain Talk about Professional Certification," *Instructional Innovator* 25, no. 9 (December 1980): 22-24, 29.

Although professional certification, accreditation, and licensure regulate the measurement of competencies, the methodologies, populations, and purposes of regulation differ. Because of these distinctions, professional certification, accreditation, and licensure should not be used synonymously. Practitioners in adult education and HRD frequently use these terms interchangeably, which leads to the increased confusion and misapplication of each.

The fact that professional certification, accreditation, and licensure are sometimes used interchangeably presents other problems. Professionals in adult education and HRD may view professional certification, accreditation, and licensure as one and the same because of the lack of understanding of the purpose, nature, and delivery system of each process. This lack of knowledge and information causes misunderstanding, confusion, and frustration on the part of those concerned with the topic of professional certification. The problem further impedes communication and diminishes the enthusiasm of individuals, which ultimately results in the hampering of the implementation process of professional certification programs (Gilley and Galbraith 1986).

This definitional dilemma has become a staggering problem for practitioners in adult education and HRD. The problem continues to restrict the free exchange of ideas regarding the primary purposes of professional certification. A thorough examination of this topic is prevented by the failure to transcend the definitional issue.

Purpose of Professional Certification

The primary purpose of professional certification is "to promote the professional competencies of the association and society's membership" (Miller 1976, p. 6). The concept that professional certification is established to separate individual practitioners who are competent from those who are not is further supported in a study of 70 associations that maintained certification programs (Gilley 1985a). In the study, 97 percent of the associations believed that identified competencies are at the heart of a professional certification program. These associations also believed that the primary purpose of professional certification was to increase and/or ensure professional competence.

Although professional certification holds as its primary purpose the promotion of competencies, other purposes have been identified. One such purpose is to promote professionalism and to enhance the prestige of the profession through the improvement of its public image. This is accomplished through the identification and development of an agreed-upon body of knowledge, a set of competencies, and a regulatory mechanism that evaluates the proficiency of practitioners before they can achieve professional status (Gilley 1986). This communicates to the public the deep concern that the profession has regarding the quality of its members. The use of a regulatory mechanism to measure the competencies of members of the profession reveals the restrictive nature of the profession, demonstrating the importance of those who qualify within the guidelines of the profession.

Another purpose, which is closely related to the enhancement of professionalism, is that professional certification protects the public from incompetent practitioners. In addition, this process protects employers by providing them a means of comparing potential applicants. For individuals who are certified by their respective professional associations, increased job stability may be a result and a purpose for seeking professional certification. Since the profession recognizes only those certified practitioners, a restriction on the number of qualified persons entering the profession will be maintained, creating a sense of continuity. An indirect result of the professional certification process encourages individuals to remain in their chosen profession (Gilley and Galbraith 1986).

Professional associations have recognized another purpose of professional certification as being a deterrent to high attrition levels. Many have developed and utilized professional certification programs to stabilize memberships and to prevent their members from being recruited by other professional associations, which is referred to as "cannibalism" (Galbraith and Gilley 1985). Since many professional associations can represent the interest and scope of a particular profession, professional certification is often viewed as a distinctive competitive advantage in soliciting and retaining membership. For example, the interests of adult education and HRD professionals could be represented by numerous professional associations such as the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, American Society for Training and Development, National Society for Performance and Instruction, American Society for Personnel Administration, American Vocational Association, and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology, to name a few.

Still another purpose for professional certification programs is the popular belief that this process is established in anticipation of avoiding external governmental regulations and/or legislative action (Miller 1976). However, Gilley (1985a) reported that 93 percent of the associations and societies surveyed did not initiate or accelerate their professional certification program in anticipation of such action. Regardless of this research evidence, many associations continue to

maintain the belief that professional certification programs should be developed to avoid governmental intervention.

The improvement of academic programs has resulted from the development of many professional certification programs; this is often the purpose of such programs (Galbraith and Gilley 1985). Since competencies are identified for professional certified practitioners by those who constitute the field, these competencies serve as a foundation for providing the academic and professional preparation programs with structured and tested information that can be used in their curriculum and program development activities. Professional certification programs must take into account the ever-changing nature of a profession and adjust their qualification criteria accordingly. This serves as a feedback mechanism to academic programs that are responsible for the development of current and updated curricula used in the preparation of practitioners.

Professional associations and practitioners view the purpose of professional certification programs as a way of enhancing associations' revenues or personal incomes. An increase in revenue to the association is realized as a result of the fees charged for participation in the certification program. Expenses incurred through the administration of the program such as promotion costs, operating costs, and legal fees are offset through this increased revenue. Some professional associations even generate a profit that can further reduce total operating expenses of the association or provide revenue for additional services. Individuals, on the other hand, believe that holding a certificate can improve their personal income levels through promotions and/or step raises tied to personal growth and development.

Individuals often perceive professional certification as a means of distinguishing themselves from peers and colleagues. Therefore, professional certification assists in the advancement of personal prestige, which can also enhance one's self-esteem. Indirectly, professional certification can thus be considered a self-actualization activity. Finally, senior-level practitioners, consultants, and educators view professional certification as a method for remaining current as well as a way to improve their performance and proficiency (Gilley 1985a).

The term "purpose" is viewed as the mission of a process or activity and refers to the end results that are desired (Galbraith and Gilley 1985). Professional certification has as its primary purpose the advancement and promotion of professional competencies. However, as detailed earlier, associations and practitioners maintain additional purposes for a professional certification program. Each of these identified purposes serve as motives for the initiation, development, and maintenance of such programs. The motives for professional certification are examined in the following section.

Motives for Professional Certification

Motives for professional certification are different from purposes in that motives induce action while purposes only provide the intent or aim. As practitioners in adult education and HRD examine certification purposes and determine whether or not such programs are warranted, they must recognize the motives that guide their decisions and actions. In addition, motives are based on internal and external needs, which may be both personal and professional in nature. Therefore, each purpose identified for professional certification can be traced back to an unsatisfied need.

Motives for professional certification can be examined from a hierarchical perspective as shown in figure 1. The two lowest levels on the hierarchy are those motives that contribute very

little to the advancement of the profession or professional. These motives are guided by reactions to outside stimuli such as potential governmental regulation and/or actions of other associations. The level of "me-too-ism" refers to a concept whereby practitioners or associations seek to identify or equate themselves with successful programs, activities, or ideas. For example, if a national professional association in adult education or one in HRD implemented a successful certification program, other adult education or HRD associations may duplicate the effect in order to remain competitive. The motive behind this type of reaction is a desire to maintain equality in the eyes of the profession. Negative aspects of such a motive may be that a premature decision-making process takes place that results in the implementation of certification programs that are not well thought out or developed. This could also result in the saturation of programs, diminishing the value of the professional certificate for the practitioner.

The next level on the hierarchy of motives is "fear," which refers to the anticipation of a negative consequence. The primary force behind this motive is that some other political body will regulate and govern the profession. Professional certification programs are often developed through a motivation of fear of outside intervention. The idea of some professional associations and practitioners being regulated and governed by some other political body is stimulation enough to begin designing, developing, and implementing a professional certification program in an effort to remain autonomous. In terms of the individual practitioners, the motive of fear is manifested in the desire to be accepted and viewed as competent by fellow peers and colleagues.

The third level on the hierarchy, as depicted in figure 1, is "control," which refers to the restrictive motives for professional certification. Professional associations and practitioners are motivated by the belief that they can best control the level of quality of practitioners, as well as the entry of individuals into the profession, through the establishment of a professional certification program. This type of gatekeeping activity is perceived as a deterrent against incompetent practitioners. It is at this control level that the motive for a professional certification program begins to be guided by the desire to enhance the profession. Conversely, the previous two levels on the hierarchy are motivated by self-serving and self-perpetuating interests and needs.

"Status" is the fourth level on the hierarchy of motives. This motive refers to the enhancement of the profession and its practitioners as a result of the development of the professional certification program. Status is realized when individuals within the profession recognize the importance and value of the certificate. Once this has occurred, individuals will strive to attain a higher level of competence in order to gain the approval of their peers and colleagues. Therefore, status is an intrinsic motive for the professional association and practitioner as well as an extrinsic motive in terms of increasing membership, revenue, and recognition.

"Self-development," the fifth and final level on the hierarchy of motives, refers to the opportunity to develop to the highest level of competence. For the profession and practitioner, the self-development motive for professional certification requires a continuous and critical evaluation of the present status against the potential status as a result of change. A professional certification program guided by the self-development motive will continuously strive to monitor the current trends and changes in order to account for those changes through the updating of its program to the enhancement of the profession. The profession as well as the practitioners are encouraged through this motive to reach their highest potential.

Status and self-development levels on the hierarchy comprise the growth category as seen in figure 1. The growth category of the motive hierarchy indicates that there is a potential opportunity for growth and enhancement of the profession and its practitioners who comprise that profession. The two highest levels of the hierarchy are those motives that contribute to the greatest advancement of the profession or professional.

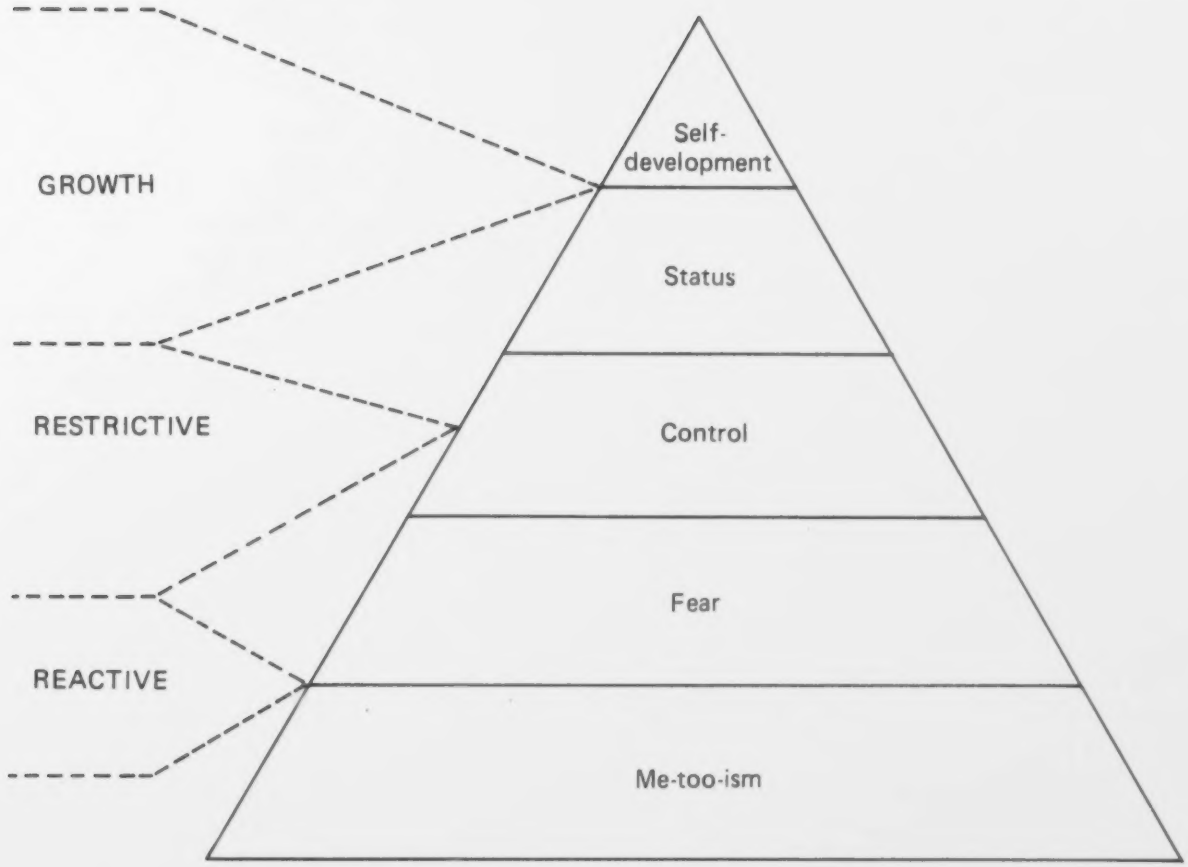

Figure 1. Hierarchy of motives

Importance of Professional Certification

As discussed previously, purposes provide the intent of an action while motives induce action. Importance, as discussed here, refers to the significance or impact of an action. In this section, the importance of professional certification will be examined from the perspectives of the practitioner and profession.

The significance of professional certification for practitioners can be realized in the improvement of their performance through the advancement of identified competencies. As a result, self-worth and self-concept are enhanced, providing practitioners with greater confidence and self-satisfaction in the tasks they perform. Professional certification program participants must continuously analyze and reevaluate their level of competence against the endorsed competence level established by the profession in order to determine deficiencies and strengths. Based upon this analysis, practitioners can develop a self-improvement plan of action to rectify any deficiencies and further improve their advanced skills. Finally, perhaps the most important aspect of professional certification for practitioners is that it communicates clearly the expectations of the profession. This enables practitioners to perform their roles and tasks within the profession more effectively.

Professional certification provides structure and continuity of the profession's mission. The image of the profession is thus crystalized in the eyes of the public. Because of the dedication to quality, professional certification further enhances the image. The profession can also better maintain and govern the quality of practitioners through professional certification programs that regulate and restrict entry into the profession. In the final analysis, professional certification enables the profession to present a valid and reliable approach to the dissemination of qualified practitioners to the general public.

Historical Perspectives of Credentialing and Professional Associations

For a better understanding of the credentialing process and how it evolved, a brief historical description will be presented. In addition, the relationship of professionalism to the credentialing process of professional certification will be examined. The final two sections will take a more specific focus and describe certification activities undertaken by the adult education and HRD fields and their professional associations.

Brief History of Credentialing

Historically, credentialing has been developed by professions which offered a unique and definite service in order to protect and safeguard the welfare of the public from incompetent practitioners. The earliest record of credentialing can be traced to ancient Athens. According to Derbyshire (1969), Frederick II, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, developed the first medical credentialing practice during the 13th century. During this same period, the early church served as the European educational credentialing agency. Another example of early credentialing activities can be traced back to the practice of the medieval craft guilds in restricting admission to the practice of a craft to preserve the monopolistic power of the guild. These examples reflect that credentialing has existed in the workplace for several centuries.

In the United States, credentialing has evolved from two fundamental orientations: the medical and legal professions, and teacher certification. Each of these approaches serve as a benchmark for today's professional certification movement, often viewed as a 20th-century phenomenon.

In colonial America, physicians and lawyers were rarely licensed. The first medical licensure program was instituted by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1639. The legal profession did not maintain a credentialing program until 1730 when the colony of New York imposed an apprenticeship upon lawyers before allowing them to argue their cases before the courts (Griffith and Marcus 1978). During this period, credentialing was not used extensively. In fact, prior to the 19th century, credentialing was associated with the interests of the dominant elite, which included the church, the aristocracy in Europe, and the commercial class in America (Reiff 1974). Because of the restrictive nature of early credentialing efforts and their dominant positions, only the upper classes were permitted to engage in selected occupations such as medicine and law. However, in response to the egalitarian sentiment of the mid-19th century, a comprehensive and wholesale deregulation of the medical and legal professions was enacted. These changes came about because people viewed professions as monopolies that restricted free trade, blocked the entry of the lower classes, were too complicated, and restricted individual freedoms and democracy (Gross 1978). As a result of this movement, many incompetent and poorly trained practitioners were able to enter the medical and legal professions. In reaction to this backlash movement, bar associations and

medical societies began promoting the relationship between competencies and credentialing. This was coupled with the congressional authorization of the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1887, which began a new era of governmental protection (ibid.). By the turn of the century, every state in the nation had developed and was enforcing some type of statutory medical regulation (Hogan 1979). In 1910, the famous Flexner Report was published by the American Medical Association, resulting in a permanent interlocking between accreditation and licensure. The result of this publication was the closing of more than 40 percent of the medical schools within a 5-year period. In 1918, the dentistry profession established a credentialing program, followed by the bar association in 1923 and the pharmacy profession in 1940 (Griffith and Marcus 1978). By 1970, the health field alone licensed 30 different occupations. As a direct result, the National Health Certifying Agency, dedicated to the improvement of credentialing activities, was created.

The first known teacher certification programs in the United States were affiliated with the church in order to guarantee that schoolmasters maintained orthodox religious beliefs (Haggett and Stinnett 1956). However, as the country expanded and grew more complex, local communities were forced to establish individual criteria for instructors. As a result, the depth and degree of commonality among programs varied greatly. Shortly after World War II, the National Education Association instituted a professional standard movement. The purpose of this movement was to improve and standardize existing programs, but even today different levels and types exist. These efforts resulted in the development of teacher certification programs in every state by 1960. During the past three decades, the federal and state governments have also attempted to ensure high standards of teacher preparation, to improve the certification process, and to establish uniformity in requirements.

Professional associations also began exploring the credentialing process in an effort to determine competence of their practitioners. In 1979, the American Society for Association Executives (ASAE) reported that more than 450 associations were offering certification programs. According to Galey (1979), associations developed programs for certification to meet several goals:

1. To increase the visibility of the field and of the association
2. To increase the recognition of qualified workers in the field
3. To improve the performance and qualifications of the membership
4. To enhance the prestige of the association and its members. (p. 34)

In times past, professional societies have developed certification programs arbitrarily. But today, a three-stage approach is commonly followed. First, associations identify professional competencies, test and validate them, and place them in performance terms. Next, they establish professional standards or minimal levels of competency performance. Finally, they develop the certification program and then encourage individuals to participate as a way to develop competencies that are identified as vital to the profession.

Many professional certification programs have been developed after the medical and legal model in an attempt to reflect the high standards and image of those professions. In fact, many individuals believe that the teacher certification model serves as the foundation for the present professional certification movement. Neither of the two models truly represents the modern professional certification movement. In reality they are both licensing mechanisms regulated by a local body, and thus do not adhere to the accepted definition or voluntarism of the professional certification credentialing process.

The professional certification model, though similar in characteristics to the medical and legal and teacher certification models, arose in response to a "recognized need to promote the professional competence of associations' memberships" (Miller 1976, p. 9).

The rapid expansion of knowledge and technology has placed additional pressure on members of an occupational group to achieve and maintain professional competencies, and the professional certification process has been viewed as an essential element in that acquisition.

Professionalization's Relationship to Professional Certification

Historically, professional certification has been perceived as an essential component of professionalization. Professionalization can be approached from four perspectives: from a philosophical orientation, from a developmental perspective that is comprised of various stages, from a characteristics orientation, and from a nontraditional approach. Each of these orientations provides insight into the evolutionary process of a profession.

Various schools of thought comprise the philosophical orientation to professionalization. The traditional model of professionalization, which consists of coordination, leadership, extension of schooling, certification, accreditation, and licensure, has been challenged by a less-formal approach (Carlson 1977). Emphasis is placed upon individual freedoms and the democratic society as opposed to the packaging and marketing of "official knowledge" disseminated by often self-appointed and self-serving experts in a discipline (Ohliger 1974). According to this philosophical approach, professional certification would not be viewed as a viable component because of its controlling and restrictive nature. Attitudinal orientation is another philosophical approach to professionalization. This philosophy builds upon the construct that individual attitudes of professionalization, sense of calling, personal freedom, public service, and self-regulation will determine the level of professionalization. Based upon these five areas, individuals can evaluate the status and prestige of various occupational groups (Hall 1968). This approach accepts the tenet of self-regulation and control, which can include professional certification as well as other forms of diagnostic evaluation. Another philosophical orientation to professionalization is eclecticism. An eclectic approach uses procedures, techniques, methods, and concepts from a variety of sources, systems, and schools of thought. Eclecticism accepts the belief that a single orientation is limiting and that the use of numerous procedures and concepts can better serve the individual and the profession. From this philosophical base, professional certification would be an alternative depending upon whether the individual or profession believed it to be advantageous.

Professionalization can also be viewed from a developmental perspective; that is, a profession evolves through distinct stages in an effort to achieve optimal professionalized status. In addition, a profession would consist of specific characteristics that can serve as a checklist in the differentiation of occupations. These two components constitute the basis of the developmental orientation.

Bullett (1981) defined a profession as

> a field of human endeavor with a well-defined body of knowledge, containing basic principles common to all applications and techniques unique to the field, with practitioners skilled and experienced in applying these techniques, dedicated to the public interest. (p. 5)

From this definition, four common elements can be identified: (1) a specialized body of knowledge, (2) applications of developed and endorsed competencies, (3) common principles, and (4) a dedication to the public interest.

According to Wilensky (1964), the established professions such as dentistry, law, and medicine developed through a similar evolutionary process. This process is referred to as the "Natural Process of Professionalization." He described the process as follows:

> There is a typical process by which the established professions have arrived: men begin doing the work full time and stake out a jurisdiction; the early masters of the technique or adherents of the movement become concerned about standards of training and practice and set up a training school, which if not lodged in universities at the outset, makes academic connection within two or three decades; the teachers and activists then achieve success in promoting more effective organization, first local, then national through either the transformation of an existing occupational association or the creation of a new one. Toward the end, legal protection of the monopoly of skill appears; at the end a formal code of ethics is adopted. (p. 139)

The process implies that as a profession evolves it strives to achieve "ideal professional status" (Brown 1984, p. 99).

Warzynski and Noble (1976) identified five distinct stages that could be used as a guide in distinguishing professions from occupations. The five stages in their process of professionalization include the following:

1. A group of individuals begins working on a full-time basis to perform a service in response to a pressing societal need.

2. Since specialized knowledge and training are necessary to perform this service, a training school (usually university-based) is established.

3. The graduates of the training school push for prescribed training and form a professional association.

4. The professional association wins political support and is granted the privilege of licensing or certifying its members under the law.

5. The professional association adopts a code of ethics to regulate the conduct of its members and to ensure appropriate service to clients. (p. 13)

Whyte (1977), after studying the development process of a number of professions, established six stages of professional development. First, professional development begins with an informal association of interested persons. The recognition of a distinct body of knowledge is the second stage. The formal organization of practitioners into an institute or society and the establishment of entry requirements based either on experience alone or a combination of experience and qualification are the next two stages of professional development. Fifth, ethical and disciplinary codes are established. The final stage of professional development involves the establishment of entry requirements whereby academic qualifications and a specified period of experience are mandatory to enter the profession.

Brown (1984) suggested that the developmental process of professionalization revealed five areas of improvement for adult education:

1. Gradual delineation of adult education as a full-time activity for more and more practitioners
2. Graduate programs becoming strengthened and increasing in number
3. Further definition of adult education by a growing professional association
4. The beginnings of efforts to codify ethics
5. The use of association funds to promote legislation at the state level and increasing political involvement for adult educators. (p. 99)

Although these gains are important, the field of adult education has not realized its fullest maturation. Each of these five areas can be applied to the HRD field as well. They too have not reached their optimal profession status. Regardless of the evolutionary process of a profession one wishes to adopt, a very important but common element is evident—the establishment of some form of regulatory mechanism used to recognize competent practitioners.

Professionalization can also be viewed from a perspective that uses identified characteristics to assist in the evolutionary process of a vocation toward professional status (Vollmer and Mills 1966). Houle (1980) extended this perspective by identifying 14 characteristics that were "broadly associated with the professionalization process" (p. 34). He divided these characteristics into conceptual, performance, and collective identity characteristics. Credentialing was identified in the collective identity characteristics group, which consists of "systems and structures that foster and maintain conceptual and competency characteristics" (p. 49). Houle viewed credentialing as an important means of identifying practitioners who have the capacity to perform at an acceptable level. From the characteristic perspective, professional certification may be viewed as an acceptable credentialing mechanism within the professionalization process.

Scheer (1964) maintained that the professionalization process also contained essential characteristics. Each of these characteristics were interrelated and vital to the development of a profession. He believed that the importance placed upon different characteristics varied from profession to profession. He maintained that a profession consisted of the following characteristics:

1. A code of ethics
2. An organized and accepted body of knowledge
3. Specialized (identified competencies) skills
4. Minimum educational requirement of its members
5. Provision for certification of proficiency before a member can achieve professional status
6. An orderly process in the fulfillment of responsibilities
7. Opportunity for the promulgation and interchange of ideas among its members

8. An acceptance of the disciplines of the profession, realizing that the price of failure or malpractice is expulsion from the profession

In addition to the eight characteristics, Brown (1982) identified another characteristic that she referred to as the "calling" into the profession. This characteristic is somewhat existential in nature and is difficult to quantify because it relates to the affective domain.

In comparing the fields of adult education and HRD to Scheer's eight characteristics, it can be concluded that only two characteristics clearly apply: a code of ethics and the interchange of ideas among its members. Both are provided through membership in professional associations such as the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE), American Society for Personnel Administrators (ASPA), American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), and the National Society for Performance and Instruction (NSPI).

Neither adult education nor HRD has established a uniform and accepted body of knowledge nor have they identified a specific set of competencies for their fields. However, both items have received considerable attention during the past several years. In the ASTD *Models for Excellence* (1983), a survey study, a comprehensive list of 31 competencies and 15 roles were identified for training and development professionals. This list of competencies has not been placed in performance terms nor has it been validated. Experts feel that additional research is required before the competencies can be endorsed and used by the field of HRD. In terms of adult education, the Commission of Professors of Adult Education (CPAE) (1985) has proposed a standardized curriculum for graduate programs in adult education. In addition, the CPAE has attempted to establish faculty requirements as well as teaching and advising criteria. The process consists of a voluntary set of guidelines and requirements; however, CPAE does not maintain the political power to enforce them. This is the most recent attempt to establish an organized and standardized curriculum and faculty criteria. The field of HRD has not evolved to this point at the present time.

Although many adult education and HRD practitioners have at least an undergraduate education, both fields fail to maintain a minimum educational requirement. Neither field is structured in such a way to punish practitioners for malpractice or incompetence nor do they currently maintain an orderly process for the fulfillment of responsibilities.

Finally, the field of adult education does not have a standardized certifying body that tests the proficiency of its members. The field of HRD does, however, maintain three certification bodies: one through the American Society for Personnel Administrators, the second through the American Compensation Association, and the third through the National Career Development Association. None of the certifying bodies have been endorsed by the entire HRD field.

According to the eight characteristics identified by Scheer, adult education and HRD cannot qualify as professions although a considerable amount of professionalization has occurred. The developmental process and the characteristics that constitute a profession require that professional certification or the establishment of entry-level requirements be instituted. The similarity between these two appears to support Miller's (1976) premise that professionalization is a prime motivator for professional certification. However, neither the field of adult education nor HRD currently endorses this philosophy of professionalization.

The fourth perspective challenges the traditional model of professionalization by advocating that the individuals who comprise an occupational group should determine the tenets of their profession (Cervero 1985). This nontraditional perspective maintains that the members of a discipline

are able to discern the unique characteristics and needs of the occupation. Because of this awareness, they are better able to identify the essential elements that constitute what they believe to be a profession. The nontraditional approach to professionalization seriously questions the importance of any credentialing process because it cannot adequately measure the diverse dimensions that encompass a specific occupation. In addition, this orientation may or may not embrace the tenets of the philosophical, developmental, and characteristic perspectives unless viewed as essential by the members in the development of their professional identity.

Adult Education's Certification Activities

Historically, the discussion of credentialing of adult education practitioners has been concentrated around the issues of adult development activities, a teacher certification model, and the identification of competencies, attitudes, and behaviors. Professional certification, as defined in this monograph, has not been the principal focus of discussion by adult educators. Three decades ago Houle (1956) identified six general objectives for the training of all adult educators. He was more concerned with the development of adult educators than with the credentialing process. In 1961 Chamberlain produced a list of 15 attitudes and behaviors that should be common to all adult educators. Chamberlain suggested that these 15 attitudes and behaviors comprised the necessary competencies of adult educators but did not consider the issue of credentialing in detail. Aker (1963) conducted a study on behalf of the Commission of Professors of Adult Education of the Adult Education Association of the U.S.A. (AEA-USA) and sought to develop a set of criteria for evaluating graduate adult education programs. He identified 400 behavioral statements from the literature, which ultimately resulted in the 23 most important descriptions of the objectives for adult education graduate study. Later, he addressed the issue of teacher certification in adult education (Aker 1975).

The National Association for Public Continuing and Adult Education (NAPCAE) (1969, 1972) conducted two surveys to determine the current status of the regulations for state certification for adult education teachers and administrators. The results indicated that most state certification regulations for adult education teachers and administrators followed the traditional teacher certification model. The task force of NAPCAE reported that certification was favorable but also suggested that if a field of adult education existed, the core competencies in it could be identified and evaluated and that persons who possessed the competencies should be certified. However, through the examination of state regulations NAPCAE was referring to licensure and not certification.

The decade of the 1970s also produced much discussion on the topic of credentialing (Bunning 1976; Cameron, Rockhill, and Wright 1976; Griffith and Marcus 1978; Jensen 1972; Mattran 1976; Rockhill 1976; Sharp 1976). During this period, the discussion centered on the criteria for certification, the advantages and disadvantages for the field of adult education, the need for the development of professional programs, professional control, assessment procedures, and the rewards for excellence. Mattran (1976) suggested that credentialing was a vital component of adult education but warned that the "certification required of practitioners has substance enough to assure those whom we serve that our services are truly of professional caliber" (p. 306). Sharp (1976) presented an approach to certification in adult education through the development of a "truly professional program for national certification" (p. 40). He suggested that a major university, a professional organization, or a special commission backed by a major funding institution should "establish a task force to (1) identify the skills and competencies appropriate to an adult educator, (2) identify assessment procedures which are both appropriate to the competencies and easily administerable in a variety of times and places by a variety of people, and (3) establish some

machinery for evaluating the assessment process in order to keep it updated and improved" (pp. 40, 52). Mattran indicated that the need for professional credentialing would continue as society moved into a lifelong learning mode and that an appropriate approach for the development of a professional certification program in adult education was needed. Shortly after Sharp's discussion, a task force on certification was established by the Commission of Professors of Adult Education for the purpose of examining the issue of certification for adult educators (Cameron, Rockhill, and Wright 1976). The mystique of certification, education, and professionalization was also addressed by Rockhill (1976), who questioned the professional control and standardization that certification could bring about. However, it was recognized that certification posed a major dilemma for adult education because of the growing social demand for it and the fact that if adult educators did not accept certification, they could be cut out of the economic reward structure.

During the mid-1970s, Bunning (1976) conducted a Delphi study in which he identified the 9 highest priority knowledge and 11 highest priority skill statements believed to be essential to practicing adult educators. Bunning's Delphi study also yielded 31 additional lower priority knowledge statements and 26 additional lower priority skill statements. It was concluded that the work by Bunning, Chamberlain, Houle, and to a lesser degree Aker, was rather global and should have specific meaning only to those individuals already highly knowledgeable in the field of adult education (Griffith and Marcus 1978). Finally, a critical examination of accreditation, certification, and licensure for adult education teachers was conducted in 1978 for the Illinois Board of Education (Griffith and Marcus 1978). Their focus was on the adult secondary education teachers and how credentialing mechanisms affected them.

The 1970s marked a decade of debate over the credentialing issue; however, as adult education moved into the 1980s less emphasis and discussion on the issue appeared. In *Examining Controversies in Adult Education*, a book by Kreitlow et al. (1981), the issue of certification was debated by Cameron (1981), who believed certification should be established, and by James (1981), who opposed certification because it was unfeasible and unnecessary.

Cameron (1981) accepted the rationale that professional certification was necessary because of the (1) changing nature of educational tasks required of adult educators, (2) need for increased professional skills, and (3) special competencies required to function as an adult educator. Cameron indicated that certification should be voluntary and standards should be developed by the organization that represents the profession. James (1981) rejected Cameron's rationale by indicating that adult education was too diverse to implement a certification program. She proceeded to examine five assumptions concerning the certification issue and argued that "certification is merely an empty promise" (p. 86). James suggested that (1) there is not a core of knowledge and skills that can be identified as unique to adult education, (2) the level of competence to be required for certification cannot be established, (3) a process and an entity to review and evaluate cannot be designed, (4) certification will not offer recognition and protection to adult education as a profession, and (5) a correlation between certification and teacher effectiveness cannot be demonstrated. However, according to Gilley (1985a), the first four assumptions have been successfully addressed by other professional associations in the development of certification.

Neither Cameron nor James accurately defined the term "certification" nor addressed the developmental process of a profession. In addition, neither examined the characteristics that constitute a profession. A comprehensive review of the purposes for certification was not provided by Cameron, which limited and narrowed her arguments. James recommended alternatives to certification that did not advance the profession through the identification and improvement of competencies for adult education practitioners.

Since the two professional associations, NAPCAE and the AEA-USA, joined together to form the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE), the most recent discussion on the topic of professional certification, as defined in this monograph, and its implications for adult education has been by Galbraith and Gilley (1985). They examined the definitional dilemma of credentialing and ultimately defined the term "professional certification" as well as its purposes. Positive and negative implications for the adult education field were presented. Galbraith and Gilley challenged adult education professionals to analyze critically and address numerous questions regarding the development and implementation of a professional certification program.

HRD Professional Associations' Certification Activities

Several HRD-related professional associations have dedicated themselves to the development and implementation of professional certification programs for their memberships. Each of these professional associations specializes in a variety of functional areas. They include instructional design, career development, human resource management, classroom training, needs assessment, program planning and evaluation, computer training, and employee assistance programs. Several HRD professional associations have been involved with professional certification program activities. These activities will be examined in this section.

In 1972, the membership of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) voted against certification as a process by which professional development was to be obtained. As an alternative, the Professional Standards Committee was asked to examine and concentrate its efforts on acquiring the basic competencies for the HRD professional (Hatcher 1974). Again in 1978, HRD professionals indicated that the lack of professional development was still perceived to be a major concern (Clements, Pinto, and Walker 1978).

Since professional development was of paramount importance to the members of ASTD, they engaged in several research activities designed to identify HRD roles and competencies. Pinto and Walker (1978) identified 14 different activities performed by HRD practitioners. This study served as a foundation for future research conducted by ASTD.

In 1983 ASTD reported the results of a yearlong comprehensive competency study. This study, known as the *Models for Excellence*, produced a comprehensive list of 31 competencies and identified 15 roles performed by training and development professionals. It was the first complete list of competencies for the training and development field. The identification of competencies eliminated the principal obstacle for the adoption of certification. According to McCullough and McLagan (1983), the question for certification and accreditation should be reexamined given the results from the *Models for Excellence*. Consequently, the issues of professional standards and certification are presently being investigated by ASTD.

In 1984, the Board of Directors of ASTD commissioned the Professional Standards Task Force to study the perceptions of its members regarding professional standards and certification. The mission of the task force was to investigate the issue of professional standards and certification using broad-based and appropriate research processes and to make recommendations to the Board of Directors regarding the implementation of professional standards and/or certification programs. Six fundamental research processes were employed: (1) a comprehensive literature review consisting of the history of credentialing, purpose of professional certification, the differentiation of important terminology, and a review of training related societies; (2) a review of certification programs sponsored by professional associations and societies regarding the procedures

established and issues addressed in the development of professional certification programs and to identify and prioritize the criteria for professional practice required by certifying boards; (3) a membership survey (2,000 surveyed, 670 responded) that provided information regarding the desirability and usefulness of the establishment of professional standards and certification procedures; (4) an HRD executives survey (1,000 surveyed, 290 responded) to determine their attitudes toward professional standards and certification; (5) testimony of members of ASTD at the 1984 ASTD National Conference in Dallas, Texas, regarding their personal views of professional standards and certification; and (6) a search of related legislation and its impact on the HRD field. From this information, five recommendations were presented to the ASTD Board of Directors. It was concluded that professional certification should not be initiated at this time but that the field of HRD should establish professional standards by which HRD practitioners could evaluate their own level of competence and ethical behavior. They also recommended to the Board of Directors that "ASTD, as an essential part of its leadership role, must establish, implement and communicate such professional standards" (O'Mara 1985, p. 5). In addition, the task force suggested that the Board of Directors should review annually the status of certification in the HRD field as well as legislation related to professional certification and to determine what role ASTD should assume. Finally, it was recommended that ASTD "initiate an on-going process to educate HRD practitioners regarding standards, ethics and professional certification" (ibid.).

Most recently, the Professors of HRD held a 3-day preconference before the 1986 ASTD National Conference concerning the issue of "building and maintaining responsive HRD curriculums." Part of their mission was to examine the essential and desirable competencies necessary to function as an HRD professional in the 1980s and beyond. The preconference was concerned with academic preparation and did not address the issues confronting the total professional certification program process.

Another HRD association involved in professional certification activities is the American Society of Personnel Administrators (ASPA). Through the Personnel Accreditation Institute (PAI), ASPA sponsors three levels of professional certification (they refer to this process, however, as "accreditation"). These levels are Senior Professional in Human Resources-Specialist (SPHR-S) or Generalist (SPHR-G), and Professional in Human Resources (PHR). Each level requires the applicant to meet various criteria, including a written examination, professional references, evidence of ethical behavior, applicable professional experience, and current employment in the respective field. According to ASPA's certification application, an undergraduate or graduate degree in personnel management or in social sciences may be substituted for the work experience requirement. ASPA has maintained a professional certification program since 1975 with the purposes of—

- recognizing individuals who have demonstrated expertise in particular fields;
- raising and maintaining professional standards in the field;
- identifying the body of knowledge as a guide to practitioners, consultants, educators, and researchers;
- aiding employers in identifying qualified practitioners; and
- providing an overview of the field as a guide to self-development.

In 1977, the National Society for Performance and Instruction (NSPI) and the Division of Instructional Development (DID) within the Association for Educational Communications and

Technology (AECT) established a joint certification task force in order to consider the question of professional certification for instructional designers. During the past 9 years, this task force has identified 16 performance-based instructional/training competencies; performed a major literature search that cross-referenced published material and competencies; met with attorneys, accountants, researchers and representatives currently administering successful professional standards and certification programs; and developed an assessment center type of performance examination. In 1985, a nonprofit organization, the International Board of Standards for Training, Performance, and Instruction, was created for the purpose of continuing certification research and consultation services. Although a final decision has not been reached regarding professional certification, NSPI/DID/AECT efforts have provided leadership and direction for the field of HRD related to the issue of professional certification.

Two highly specialized HRD associations have recently developed certification programs. The American Association for Counseling and Development (AACD) began certifying counselors in March 1983 through the National Board for Certified Counselors. Since that period more than 10,000 individuals have been certified in general counseling. Another AACD division, the National Career Development Association (NCDA), initiated certification activities for career counselors in late 1984 through the National Council for the Credentialing of Career Counselors. Both of these certification programs require a professional degree, a comprehensive written examination, an internship, professional work experience, professional references, evidence of ethical behavior, and proof of current employment in the field. This narrow and specialized type of certification is an example of the many certification programs for HRD practitioners. However, neither the AACD nor the NCDA programs are comprehensive enough to be endorsed by the entire field of HRD.

The Institute of Management Consultants (IMC) founded in 1968 is also involved with professional certification activities. Its primary focus is the advancement of professional competence in the consulting field. To be certified, candidates must submit a list of six personal and professional references, an application that details the description of their consulting practice as well as written summaries of five clients, and they must take an oral examination administered by a panel of three Certified Management Consultants for the purpose of certifying the candidate's technical and professional competence. The category of membership depends upon the educational degrees held and the number of years of professional experience. To remain certified, continuing education, including the completion of various seminars, workshops, and courses is required.

Finally, the American Compensation Association (ACA) maintains an emphasis in human resource development through its certification program. This program, aimed at compensation professionals, consists of 14 courses designed for those seeking to develop competencies in the functional areas that comprise the compensation profession. Each course in the program deals with a specific body of knowledge associated with compensation practice and theory. At the completion of the course work, applicants are required to pass a written examination.

Issues and Implications

This monograph, up to this point, has focused on the concept of what professional certification is, historical perspectives of credentialing, and the activities of professional association. In this section, the issues and implications of professional certification confronting adult education and HRD will be examined.

Issues

If adult education and HRD are to be actively involved with professional certification programs, pertinent issues must be addressed and understood. Each of these issues increases the complexity of the certification process and places additional demands on the human and financial resources of representative associations. The principal issues of professional certification are discussed here.

Administration

Professional associations interested in professional certification will be confronted with the selection of the type of administrative approach that will guide their programs. The type of administrative approach selected usually is based upon financial, legal and political considerations.

There are two types of administration of certification programs: those that are independent of the parent association and those that are under the parent association's control. If a certification program is independent of a parent association, a not-for-profit organization or corporation must be established for the purpose of certifying individuals under a 501(C)(3) and/or 501(C)(6) IRS designation. The following definitions differentiate the two:

> A 501(C)(3) is an IRS designation for a not-for-profit organization established to serve the needs of the general public. Such an organization's mission, goals, and by-laws allow it to solicit funds that are tax deductible to individuals and businesses. Its focus is broader than just meeting the needs of a profession.
>
> A 501(C)(6) is also a not-for-profit organization; however, it is usually set up to meet the needs of a profession or specific group. Donations by individuals are not tax deductible. Donations by businesses are classified as promotional or other business expenses. (Hale 1984, p. 10)

In terms of a professional certification program being independent of the parent association, Miller (1976) states that "independence was typically defined as the absence of financial assistance and governance from the parent association" (p. 7). The degree of independence is measured by the amount of financial assistance the certifying board receives. The financial issue is analogous to a two-edged sword. In the early developmental stages of professional certification programs, some financial support is needed to assist in the administration of the program. Conversely, the parent association may expect to influence the administration of the program because of its initial financial support.

However, after the initial financial support is provided, the administration of an independent organization is responsible for generating all of its necessary operating revenue. Although it enjoys the benefit of controlling the revenue and using it only for the purpose of professional certification, the independent organization is ultimately accountable for program expenditures and funds. Another administrative function related to the financial issue is the cost of promoting a professional certification program. This revenue is needed in addition to the revenue generated for operating the program. The financial issues of administering an independent organization need to be considered carefully before adopting a professional certification program.

The administrative function also must consider legal implications that confront the independent organization. The Federal Trade Commission in 1971 reported that the sponsoring organization of the certification program is legally responsible for maintaining and updating the program in order to remain current with existing technologies and competencies. Another legal consideration is that any individual must be allowed access to the services of the certification program regardless of professional affiliation, ability to pay fees or costs charged for certification, or because of being in competition with the sponsoring certification program. Because of these legal considerations, the decision to establish an independent organization ultimately protects the parent professional associations from any legal liability.

The administrative issue also involves political considerations. The most important political issue in an independent organization is it is free to represent the concerns and interests of the entire profession minus the special interests of parent associations. Being independent also eliminates the internal and political conflicts that result from the existence within parent associations of goals and purposes that are not found in an independent organization.

When the professional certification program is under the auspices of the parent professional association, there are several administrative considerations. The first is the financial issue in which the costs of operating a professional certification program are part of the total budget of the parent association. Generation of additional revenue to operate the program is not as time consuming or as difficult because of the initial capital available from the parent association.

A parent association that controls a professional certification program is legally liable for the actions and decisions of the program. In addition, the Federal Trade Commission's regulations concerning independent organizations also apply to certification programs administered by parent professional associations.

The administrative issue for parent associations is also influenced by political considerations. Besides influencing the certification process, parent associations can politically position themselves to influence the entire profession. A professional certification program may politically enhance the image of the parent association and its credibility in the eyes of other professions and the general public. As a result of the improved image, the parent association may experience increased memberships, revenues, and demand for professional certification program services.

Competency Identification

Another important issue confronting adult education and HRD professional certification programs is the identification of competencies for practitioners. According to Bratton and Hildebrand (1980), "at the heart of any professional certification program are the competencies identified as important and unique to the profession" (p. 24). The major issue is who within the profession has the ability and background to determine the list of competencies that will be used to evaluate adult education and HRD practitioners and what process will be used to identify such competencies. How reliable and valid the list of competencies are and what process will determine such reliability and validity is another major issue. With the diversity of adult education and HRD practitioners, these issues become increasingly difficult to accomplish.

Several professional associations such as the National Society for Performance and Instruction and the Association for Educational Communications, and Technology have addressed the professional certification issue and have established guidelines regarding the endorsement of competencies. A competency should be performance oriented rather than academic oriented and at the level of an experienced professional practitioner as opposed to a student or entry-level trainer and instructional designer (Bratton 1984). The endorsed competencies should measure the skills and abilities of a practitioner and should not be predicated on the practitioner's position, title, and academic degree.

Criteria for Evaluation

This issue is closely related to the identification of competency issue. The difference, however, is in the fact that the criteria are used as a mechanism to measure the competencies. The development of evaluation criteria by professional certification programs is costly and time consuming, and requires comprehensive knowledge of all aspects of evaluation and measurement. The issue of who can identify the appropriate criteria for the program remains a major concern.

The criteria for evaluation must also consider the issues of test rigor, which refers to the difficulty of the testing instrument used to measure competence, as well as test reliability and validity. Who is involved in the construction of the criteria evaluation instrument is another concern. In most situations, professional associations use practitioners, academicians, and/or external testing organizations (Miller 1976).

Several guidelines can be used to assure that the criteria established are reasonable. According to Jacobs (1979), "criteria should be no more stringent than necessary to assure that minimum competency or quality levels have been attained by applicants" (p. 5). In addition, he states that "criteria for certification must not have the purpose or effect of unreasonably restricting or boycotting competitors" (p. 5).

Grandfathering

Grandfathering, a process of allowing experienced practitioners to receive professional certification status without requiring them to engage in the activities required for certification and/or meet the standard qualifications of applicants, is another issue that must be examined by adult education and HRD professions. Some professional association may believe that grandfathering enhances the prestige of its professional certification program while other associations may adhere to the belief that it reduces the supply of applicants and diminishes the effectiveness of the program.

If a professional association allows grandfathering, a number of practitioners will receive certification, which may encourage and promote the importance of the program. This can significantly limit any criticism or opposition to the certification process. On the other hand, those rejecting the idea of grandfathering may believe that it is detrimental because it reduces the status of the professional certification program. Grandfathering may also allow certain practitioners to become certified who are not qualified. Because of grandfathering, a reduction in the number of potential practitioners desiring certification may hinder the professional certification program for some time (Miller 1976).

Legality

Several significant legal issues confront those who operate a professional certification program. According to Leavens (1984), an attorney who represents professional associations that maintain professional certification programs, the courts understand and accept the idea that certification programs are established for the purpose of separating those who are considered competent from those who are not. However, the courts are less tolerant of professional certification programs if they are established as a prerequisite for employment. Another legal concern revolves around the issue of providing certification to practitioners who are not a member of the professional association. According to Webster and Herold (1983), who reviewed Federal Trade Commission rulings, professional associations could not require practitioners who were members of the association to join the association before being allowed certification. However, these practitioners may be charged a higher fee than association members to obtain certification status. The fees charged for nonmembers must be reasonable and must only reflect those additional costs incurred by the association for operating a professional certification program. In addition, the criteria used to determine the qualifications of applicants for certification may not be more numerous for nonmembers as opposed to members of the professional association.

Another legal obligation of a professional certification program is to assure that the qualification criteria be reflective of skills actually performed by practitioners. Fees charged in connection with participation in a certification program must be reasonable as related to the direct and indirect costs involved (ibid.). Professional certification programs cannot legally discriminate against a prospective applicant because of race, creed, color, sex, or age.

Finally, for applicants who fail to receive certification, an appeals process must be established to assure the due process of the law. Under federal law, applicants maintain the right to know why they were denied certification. Legal action taken against professional certification programs has not been a major problem (Gilley 1985a).

Membership

A professional certification program will also be confronted with the issue of membership. Practitioners may be attracted and persuaded to join a professional association because it offers a certification program; however, it may discourage others from joining and participating. Membership of a professional association may become divided between those who support and those who do not support a professional certification program. Challenges and criticisms of professional certification can affect the attitudes of the membership toward the program. Specifically, criticism may come from three sources (Miller 1976). The first may be from academicians who believe that professional certification is irrelevant and/or will contribute little to professionalism in the field. In addition, many practitioners believe that being certified is meaningless and that it will

not assist them in being more effective. Finally, associations that have professional certification programs may be seen as trying to lure away members from other competing associations that do not have programs. In reaction to criticisms and challenges, most professional certification programs conduct a continuous promotional program to create and maintain enthusiasm for certification (Gilley 1985b).

Recertification

Another important issue is that of recertification, which is defined as a process of reexamining an applicant against predetermined criteria in order to determine if certification status should be retained. Because of the diversity and ever-changing nature of technology, as well as the information base, the knowledge and competency levels of practitioners can quickly be antiquated in a rapidly changing society. Therefore, if professional certification programs are established for the purpose of assuring and increasing competencies, a method for remaining current as a skilled practitioner can be provided through recertification.

Recertification activities should be initiated within 3-5 years after receiving certification status. The process of recertification should maintain the tenets of the original goals and purposes of professional certification, which requires that certification be performance oriented and not just academic oriented.

Professional certification programs, through the adoption and promotion of professional associations, may offer mandatory continuing education as a means of obtaining recertification (Phillips 1978). According to Blitzer and Dumas (1985) and Long (1983), mandatory continuing education should be viewed as an opportunity to maintain and develop further skills and competencies for one's own professional development. It should not be seen as an arbitrary requirement or necessary evil.

Revocability of Certification Status

This issue is concerned with the removal of the certification status of an individual for a serious ethical or legal violation. If a professional certification program endorses the revocability issue, criteria must be established for revoking the certification status. Most professional associations use their codes of ethics as guidelines to measure the behavior of certified practitioners. However, the U.S. Department of Justice ruled that revocability could only result from the failure to maintain certified status, not for ethical reasons (Jacobs 1982). In a study by Gilley (1985a), most associations that maintained professional certification programs believed they had the right to revoke certification status for illegal or unethical behavior. Professional certification programs should carefully examine the criteria established for revoking status to ensure compliance with the Department of Justice ruling.

Positive Implications

The establishment of a professional certification program provides numerous implications for the adult education and HRD areas. Among the positive implications are the following.

Enhancement of the Profession

One of the major implications resulting from the establishment of a professional certification program has been the belief that such a program enhances the profession. Numerous scholars have provided criteria for what characterizes a profession (Brown 1984; Carlson 1977; Cullen 1978; Warzynski and Noble 1976; Wilensky 1964). Eight fundamental characteristics of a profession have been established by Scheer (1964), one of which is the measurement of proficiency before an individual can achieve the status of professional. In addition, the evolution of a profession consists of several developmental stages. The establishment of entry requirements based on experience or a combination of experience and qualifications is mandatory for a vocation to be considered a profession (Warzynski and Noble 1976; Whyte 1977). The characteristics and the developmental process of a profession require that professional certification be instituted. Miller's (1976) premise that professional certification is necessary to enhance the profession seems to be supported by the criteria established for a profession by other scholars.

Identification and Improvement of Competencies

Professional certification programs identify and improve competencies of the adult education and HRD professional. According to Bratton and Hildebrand (1980), "at the heart of any professional certification program are the competencies identified as important and unique to the profession" (p. 24). In a survey of 70 professional associations, 97 percent agreed with the this statement (Gilley 1985a). In addition, 54 of the 70 associations revealed that the professional competencies were developed prior to the implementation of their certification program. More than half of the associations surveyed indicated that as a result of the certification program the professional competencies were improved or refined. Bratton (1984) indicated that identified competencies could be helpful to the practitioner and the profession in six different ways:

1. They will provide experienced professionals with a tool for self-assessment and professional growth.

2. They will provide a common set of concepts and vocabulary that will improve communication among professionals and other professional groups.

3. They will provide the academic and professional preparation programs with information for program development.

4. They will provide a basis for a potential certification program.

5. They will aid employers in identifying qualified applicants.

6. They will provide a basis for defining an emerging field of study. (pp. 1-2)

The identified competencies, therefore, should reflect the skill of a professional in adult education and HRD regardless of the position, title, or academic degree held. As mentioned previously, competencies should be performance oriented rather than academic oriented as well as reflect the skills of experienced practitioners as opposed to entry-level individuals.

Academic Curricular Design

Professional certification programs also hold an important implication for the academic community as a feedback mechanism for academic curricular design. Such programs can assist adult education and HRD academic programs in their curricular development and design to help assure that the appropriate skills and competencies are attained by those individuals aspiring to practice in the adult education and HRD areas. Using the identified competencies as guidelines, appropriate course work, internships, practicums, and independent projects can be established. Academic programs responding to the feedback from professional certification programs can provide assurance to the profession that their programs are current in the delivery of the appropriate curriculum necessary for the development of competent professionals.

Recognition for Practitioners

Another important implication stemming from professional certification is that it provides recognition to adult education and HRD practitioners who have obtained some qualifying level of competency, which in return allows the public and the profession to make some distinctions between those who are qualified and those who are not (Galbraith and Gilley 1985). The recognition for practitioners and the prestige associated with obtaining certification may provide incentives for adult education and HRD practitioners to strive for levels of excellence that they may or may not have previously considered worthy of attempting.

Increased Earning Potential

Practitioners who are recognized for being highly qualified and competent can increase their earning potential for the types of services they provide. Normally, the general public insists that educational and resource development needs be addressed by those most highly qualified. As a result of this desire, the certified practitioner can assure the clientele that the job will be carried out in a competent manner and the the remuneration for such efforts is a reflection of a skilled and qualified professional. The ability to secure employment and obtain a desired earning level may hinge on the attainment of a certificate from a professional certification program.

Standardization of the Profession

Professional certification programs can also provide for standardization of professions. Standardization establishes uniformity for the profession and credibility for practitioners who comprise it. In addition, it also provides assurance to the society that adult education and HRD practitioners maintain a level of competence that is consistent throughout the profession. Finally, professional certification helps the profession by providing a standard by which to address the questions of who it is, what it is, and what level of competence should society expect from the profession and its practitioners.

Negative Implications

Negative implications of professional certification programs include the following.

Division among Professionals and Profession

Adult education and HRD areas are very diverse in nature and presently suffer from an identity problem. Professional certification could further widen the gap and the division between practitioners who debate the worth of such a program. Professional associations may discover that specific groups within their association will withdraw membership and discuss possibilities of developing independent associations that meet their specific needs. Such actions could fragment the profession and its professionals into powerless and ineffective camps so that the primary purpose of serving its membership and society cannot be realized.

Core Competency Identification

The diversity of competencies for adult education and HRD practitioners makes their identification a demanding task. The reality of identifying, defining, and measuring competencies for each role or job held by practitioners seems questionable. Developing an appropriate level for each identified competency can add further confusion to the issue.

Applicant Evaluation

The professional certification process may become more complex when making a determination of who in the profession is able to establish measurable standards by which to evaluate applicants. In addition, selecting appropriate and comprehensive qualification criteria can be a demanding task. The question of what form or forms should be used to test and measure competence needs to be addressed. For example, should experience be used as a criterion and, if so, should it be based upon length of the experience, type of experience, or both? Should a detailed portfolio be used as a qualification criterion or should interviews, paper and pencil tests, performance evaluations, or client referrals also be part of the assessment? In selecting the appropriate criteria, an awareness of the validity and reliability of such measurements is needed as well as a cognizance of the diversity and complexity of adult education and HRD. Presently, few practitioners possess such a holistic awareness.

Financial and Human Costs

Professional certification programs can be very costly, especially in the early stages of their development. These costs could include such things as the recruitment and selection of qualified certification specialists, construction and design of valid and reliable tests that require lengthy and costly preliminary studies, administrative costs, maintenance costs, as well as the promotion and marketing of the certification program. The sponsoring professional association usually is responsible for the total cost and financing of the professional certification program.

Membership Restrictions

A professional association operating a certification program cannot legally require nonmembers to join before certification is issued (Webster and Herold 1983). As detailed previously in the legal issue section, professional associations may find it costly to certify nonmembers. However, it can be concluded that associations that fail to comply with this legality and discriminate on the basis of membership status are violating federal law.

Regulation of the Profession

Professional certification can be perceived as being a "gatekeeping" activity for the profession (Galbraith and Gilley 1985). The entry of qualified professionals can be severely limited, which increases the responsibility of existing practitioners to carry out the missions set forth by adult education and HRD. However, the quality of the profession may not be improved as a result of restricting entry to practitioners. An assumption concerning professional certification is that the sponsoring association is in a position to regulate and control the profession; however, because of the diversity of adult education and HRD, this may not be feasible.

A Model of the Professional Certification Program Process

The development of a professional certification program can be an enormous task. Presently, there is not a model that can be used as a reference for associations anticipating the development of a professional certification program. Since no models exist, professional associations often blindly develop certification programs and/or duplicate the efforts of other associations (Gilley 1985a). This duplication by associations increases the cost of implementing a professional certification program, drains human resources, extends the process, increases the probability of errors, and provides the opportunity for division within the organizations.

This section of the monograph will present a model of the professional certification program process in an attempt to provide a systematic approach to such program development. The proposed model is based upon Miller's (1976) study of 13 professional associations and Gilley's (1985a) study of 70 professional associations that maintained professional certification programs. Each of these studies addressed the motives for and bases of professional certification. In addition, Gilley examined the procedures followed and issues addressed by professional associations in the development of professional certification programs. He also identified and prioritized the qualification criteria used in the evaluation of applicants for certification. Miller also addressed these issues but on a limited basis.

As stated earlier in this monograph, the professional certification process is homogenous in nature. This homogeneity is based upon the commonality among the eight association types (business, education, service, trade, medical/health, engineering, finance, agriculture) studied by Gilley (1985a) and Miller (1976). They analyzed the motives for and bases of professional certification as well as the procedures followed, issues addressed, and qualification criteria used by professional associations in the establishment of such programs. From these studies and from interaction with other experts regarding professional certification, the proposed model has a logical, valid, and empirical foundation.

The process of developing a professional certification program consists of nine essential stages (see figure 2). Each stage requires that the fundamental questions regarding professional certification be answered by the professional association prior to program implementation. Each of the stages within the model will be examined separately.

The first stage in the development of a professional certification program is the identification of the purposes or motives. The stage attempts to answer the question Why is professional certification being considered? As discussed previously, five hierarchical levels of motives for professional certification exist. They include (1) self-development, (2) status, (3) control, (4) fear, and (5) me-too-ism. Once the motives for professional certification have been identified, adopted, and endorsed by an association, stage two—the process of identifying competencies unique to the profession—can begin.

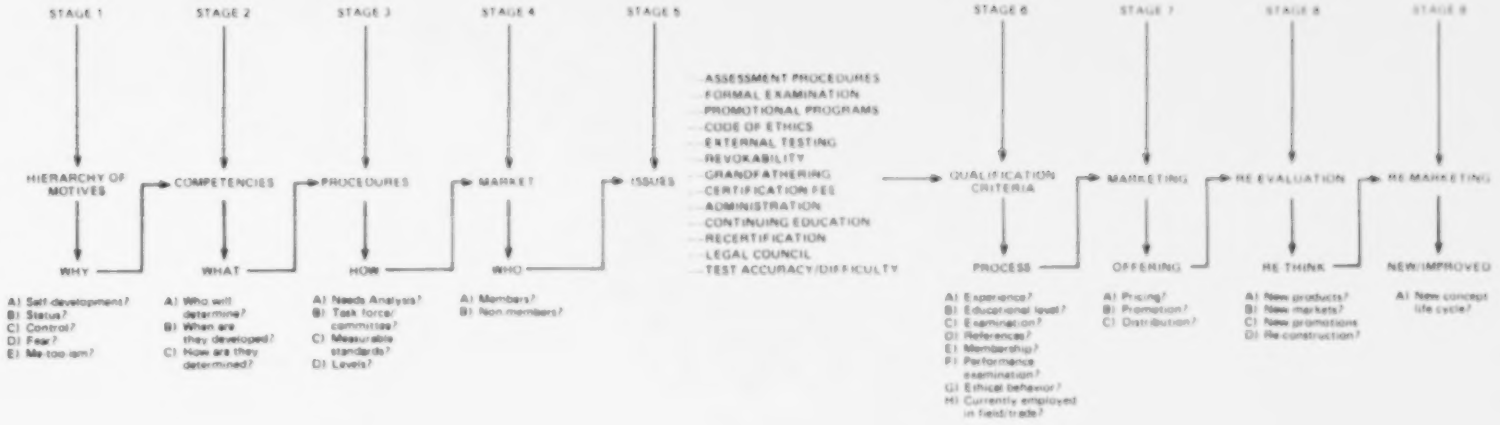

Figure 2. Model of the professional certification program process

During this second stage, associations focus their attention upon the identification and development of the vital and essential competencies that are at the core of any professional certification program. This process is often very time consuming and costly but is perceived as absolutely necessary. Several questions must be addressed in order to complete this stage. These questions will help an association to structure the competency development process, which ultimately improves the adoption and endorsement of the competencies. Questions that must be addressed include Who in the association is best qualified to determine the list of competencies?, When and how are they developed and determined?, and How can the list of competencies be validated? By determining the competencies unique to the profession, an association has in essence established and answered the question Upon what is a certification program based? However, if competencies cannot be identified, no basis for a certification program exists and continuing beyond stage two is unnecessary.

The third stage focuses on important procedural questions regarding the development of a professional certification program. At this point, it is important to conduct a comprehensive needs analysis in order to determine interest in and need for professional certification. If the membership responds negatively to the development of a program, the process should cease. However, if the membership responds positively then a task force or committee should be established to oversee the further development of the list of professional competencies or body of knowledge identified as appropriate to the profession. Strategies for the development of the certification program should be established. In addition, this task force or committee should assume the responsibility of establishing the measurable standards needed in determining professional competence. Finally, associations need to determine the feasibility and appropriateness of establishing different levels. This will be dependent upon the types of competencies identified as well as whether or not measurable standards were established that could separate individuals into various levels of competencies. This stage provides the answer to the question How is a professional certification program developed?

Stage four is referred to as the market stage because it addresses the question To whom will the professional certification program be offered? Once an association passes through this stage, it is assumed that a commitment to the development of a certification program has been made. During this market stage, the association must determine if only members of the association will be allowed to seek certification status. If the association determines that nonmembers will not be allowed to seek certification status, the association must be prepared to defend its decision.

During stage five, several essential issues must be addressed by the professional association to help shape its program identity. It is at this point that differences of opinion will be voiced and debated. Decisions reached during this issue stage may need to be reexamined at a later point in the reevaluation stage of the model. The issues that must be addressed include the following:

- What assessment procedures should be developed and used?
- Should a formal examination of candidates for certification be administered?
- Should a comprehensive promotional program to solicit support for certification be established?
- Should a code of ethics be formulated?
- Should an external testing agency be retained to develop, administer, and update qualification examinations?

- Should certification be revocable?
- Should grandfathering be allowed and is it an appropriate strategy to use in seeking support for a certification program?
- Should a certification fee be established to cover the cost of the certification process and at what level?
- Should the certification program be administered by the parent association or should a separate board be established?
- Should a certification program include provisions for continuing education and should it be incorporated into the certification process?
- Should recertification of individuals be required after a specific period of time and at what time intervals?
- Should legal council be established in order to advise associations regarding the legal implications of professional certification?
- Should test accuracy and test difficulty procedures be established by the association in order to assure the quality of its qualifying examinations?

Each of these issues will require thoughtful consideration. This stage is the most costly and time consuming of the process. Therefore, it is important that each issue be carefully examined before a decision is reached.

Stage six, qualification criteria is referred to as a process stage that addresses the question By what process will an association determine the competence of applicants for certification? In a study of 70 associations, the most important qualifying criteria used were

- professional experience
- education level
- successful completion of a written examination
- evidence of personal and professional references
- membership to the professional association
- successful completion of a performance examination
- evidence of ethical behavior
- current employment in field/occupation (Gilley 1985a).

During this stage, associations need to select the most appropriate criteria with which to evaluate applicants for certification. Selection of qualifying criteria can be a highly subjective process; however, the criteria selected must be a valid measurement of competence level.

The seventh stage refers to the marketing of the professional certification program. The certification program is ready to be offered to the target market if an optimal marketing mix has been determined. The development of an appropriate marketing mix ensures and maximizes the acceptance of the certification program. The marketing mix consists of the proper combination of the product (the certification program), the price, the place, and the promotion.

First, the association must identify the potential clientele and determine their needs and wants. This information should have been obtained during stages three and four of the model. The second step in the marketing mix is to offer the product (program) at a price that the potential applicant is willing to accept. This should have been accomplished during stage five when the association examined the certification fee issue. The third step in the marketing mix is to identify the most appropriate location and process for administering the certification program. This can be determined during stage six; however, a more in-depth critical analysis of the procedures is required during the marketing stage. The final step in the marketing mix is to promote the program by determining the proper means of communicating the availability and benefits of the program to potential applicants. The promotional program should have been established during stage five. Although most of the components of the marketing mix are developed before the marketing stage, it is here that they are blended into an effective marketing plan aimed at capturing the enthusiasm and acceptance of individuals for certification.

Many models conclude with an implementation stage and do not account for reevaluation and remarketing components. Because of the ever-changing nature of professions and their required competencies, professional certification programs must be continuously evaluated and updated. As a result, stage eight can be viewed as a rethinking stage in which the professional certification program considers new program options, markets, and promotions. In addition, in an effort to improve the current program, the issues identified in stage five should be reexamined to determine what program reconstructions should take place. What changes should occur in order to improve the quality of the certification program is the major question that needs to be addressed in this stage.

Finally, after a comprehensive reevaluation of the certification process, the new and improved version of the program should be remarketed using the concepts identified in stage seven. During stage nine, a new concept "life-cycle" is established. This concept "life-cycle" refers to a four-stage process that includes the introduction, growth, maturity, and decline of a concept over a period of time. The remarketing activities for the new and improved certification program extend the existence of the program by shifting from a maturity and/or decline stage back to the growth stage. This allows the program to be viewed as current, updated, and progressive.

The proposed model can serve as a guide to adult education and HRD professional associations as well as other associations representing various disciplines. A logical first step for adult education and HRD professional associations is to examine their motives for professional certification (stage one). At the conclusion of this task, these associations can use this proposed model in a way that allows them to examine the professional certification process in a logical and systematic manner.

Concluding Thoughts

This monograph has attempted to describe and analyze professional certification and its relationship to the fields of adult education and HRD. As shown, professional certification is a very complex and homogeneous process that has as its primary purpose the advancement of the profession through the identification of competent practitioners. The professional certification process can be a mechanism to move a discipline into the category of professional status.

Before professional certification becomes a viable option for adult education and HRD, leaders in the disciplines, professional association directors and staff as well as membership must become educated to the positive and negative implications of it. Next, they must address and thoroughly examine the motives for professional certification. This analysis will allow them to determine whether or not a program is warranted and will serve as a guide to their decisions and actions. In addition, both fields need to identify, define, and validate the competencies that constitute the diverse roles and relationships of their practitioners. Adult education and HRD have not at this time identified, defined, or validated a list of competencies that have been endorsed by their respective fields. Without such a list of competencies, no basis exists for the development of a professional certification program.

In the final analysis, the fields of adult education and HRD must determine if the costs, financial and human, exceed the benefits derived from implementing professional certification programs. If the benefits outweigh the costs then professional certification should be implemented. However, if costs exceed the benefits of such programs, an alternative solution must be realized in order to advance their respective professions.

The advantages and benefits of professional certification can only be achieved once an open and honest dialogue has been conducted by the practitioners of each field. Serious deliberation is encouraged in an effort to advance the professions to a higher level of professionalization that can benefit the practitioners and professional associations as well as the institutions, agencies, and organizations they serve in society.

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